

The Family and Its Social Integration

- a challenge

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

This twentieth century at the tail end of which you and I are perilously caught today, I am afraid, has taken disastrous turns in several directions. Our perch, all of us have to become aware of, is as ill-foreboding as that of those young magpies slipping out of their nests, and hanging with their heads down, trapped by the leg. Who knows of our danger and who comes to our rescue. It is in such a context that I want to talk to you about the family and its social integration. You would soon realize that I would rather have to talk about its disintegration in our present social context.

As for the century's faulty turns, the warped philosophy of life which the world has inherited, perhaps after the World War II, stands out as the most enimical to humanity. The accelerated development of science and technology in the world, specially in areas like incredible production rates in industry and sophistication in the effectiveness of military armaments, in weapons of offence and defence has brought about in the world a new, and we would say a strange, way of thinking called an individualistic philosophy. It is a devastating confidence in the role, mechanically of the individual, of the things he produces, to the utter neglect and disregard of the community and the collective group. It is the outcome of a sense of automation, a belief in the superiority of machines as against the role of men behind them. The cold war that ravaged the world over decades and programs like star wars which came in its wake are grim reminders of the ill effects of such thinking.

Yet another upsurge in a death-dealing direction has been the emergence everywhere in the post-war world of a supremacist tendency, backed by industrial development, economic gains and numerical strength of demographic

changes. The so-called big powers with regional identities like the one time Soviet block and the USA, groups with political affinities like the Communists and the Socialists, and even those with ethnic and religious banners, now storming the world more than ever before, violently evident in places like Bosnia, are the sore spots we discover of this new thinking.

These new power-building-blocks, with their new lines of alignment, we believe have assailed the traditional social units of the family and the home.